

Carousel Brainstorm

(aka "Write Around")

Purpose of the strategy

Use to activate prior knowledge and to build schema

- Allows teacher to check for understanding before or after studying a particular topic
- Students begin to see the interrelationships between ideas within a major subject



How it's done

- Select your main topic and make a list of subheadings or subtopics.
- Label each sheet of chart paper with one of the subtopics.
- Place students in small groups (3 or 4) and designate one student in each as the recorder.
- Give the groups a limited time (1 minute) to dictate and write all of the terms or phrases they associate with the subtopic.
- Cap the markers and pass the sheets in a pre-determined path to the next group and begin again. Students review and discuss the previously written terms and then add ideas to the new sheet. You'll need to extend the time with each passing of the sheets to allow time for review, brainstorming and for writing new ideas.
- When the sheets are returned to the groups that started with them, they review everything that has been added and circle the most important or essential terms. That way, the students spend some time critically evaluating all the possible terms and topics and making decisions about which are most representative of or most closely associated with the given topic.
- Have the students try to write a definition for their topic, a statement that explains to someone who is unfamiliar with it what that topic is really about. Tell them that since they have already circled three terms that they consider essential or fundamental to their topic, they'll probably want to USE those three terms in their definition.
- This activity is similar to Graffiti, another brainstorming or prewriting activity to activate prior knowledge. The subtopic chart paper is posted on the wall and students move from sheet to sheet, adding terms and ideas.